Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge
(RTT-ELC)
NIA and Application Overview

Presentation to States
U.S. Departments of Education and
Health and Human Services
September 1, 2011

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for participating in today's call. This call is designed for the people in the States with primary responsibility for completing the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) application. Our goal here is to orient you to how the pieces of the application fit together, so that as you start work, you waste no time. We'll take as many questions as we have time for today. We'll also make it clear how you can get your questions answered if we don't have time today – or if you think of new questions tomorrow!

Session Outcomes

Applicants better understand:

- What States must write to and where there is flexibility
- The basic structure/mechanics of the Application
- Reviewer guidelines for scoring Applications
- How to submit your Application

What we are NOT covering today, but will address in the September 13th TA session:

- The content of the notice – that is, the details of the priorities and the selection criteria.

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Today we hope to break down the Notice Inviting Applications (or NIA) and the application so you have a better understanding of the following:

- what you <u>must</u> write to and where you have choices;
- the basic structure/mechanics of the Application;
- the guidelines given to reviewers for scoring applications, and
- what must be submitted with the application

At the all-day session on Sept 13th we will focus more on the selection criteria and priorities and how to write a high-quality application.

Agenda

- Overview of RTT-ELC and Timelines
- Overview of the Notice Inviting Applications
- How the Pieces Fit Together: Priorities, Selection Criteria, Evidence, Performance Measures, and the Scoring Rubric
  - Core Areas
  - Focused Investment Areas
- Planning Considerations
- Submitting an Application
- Resources and Assistance

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Because many of you attended the prior stakeholder conference calls, we'll skip quickly through the overview of the program, and launch into the heart of it. In this call, we will do a big-picture orientation to the Notice Inviting Applications (or the NIA), so you know what to look for and where to find it.

We will walk you through examples from the application itself, so you can see how the pieces fit together.

And we'll end with things to consider as you're putting your work plan together for the next few weeks.

Today's Presenters

- Jacqueline Jones, *Senior Advisor on Early Learning to the Secretary, Office of the Secretary, ED*
- Joan Lombardi, *Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development, ACF, HHS*
- Beth Caron, *Implementation and Support Unit, ED*
- Richard Gonzales, *Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary, ACF, HHS*
- Ngozi Onunaku, *Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary , ACF, HHS*
- Jennifer Tschantz, *Office of the Secretary, ED*

Supporting the webinar presenters—

- Jane Hess, Rachel Peternith, and Daphna Krim, *Office of the General Counsel, ED*
- Joanne Weiss, *Chief of Staff, ED*
- Miriam Calderon, *Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary , ACF, HHS*
- Steven Hicks, *Office of the Secretary, ED*
- Shannon Rudisill, *Director, Office of Child Care, ACF, HHS*

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As you can see, we have a variety of people from HHS and ED -- all of whom were integral to writing this notice -- here to present this program to you today. We'll have a similar group available on September 13th.

About RTT-ELC

- A $500 M competitive grant program to support States that commit to improving the quality of their early learning and development programs through five key levers of change:
  - Successful State Systems
  - High-Quality, Accountable Programs
  - Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
  - A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and
  - Measuring Outcomes and Progress

- With an overarching goal of:
  - *Ensuring children enter kindergarten ready to succeed* by
  - Increasing access to high-quality programs for Children with High Needs

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9/2/2011

As all of you know, the Early Learning Challenge is a competitive grant program designed to support states to improve the quality of early learning and development programs and increase access to high-quality program for children with high needs with the overarching goal of ensuring that children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

This is a historic opportunity for State teams to come together and focus on five key levers of change.

Let's start with the big picture. In order to run a rigorous competition and obligate funds to grantees before December 31, 2011, we waived rulemaking on this new program, which means we did not go through the formal public comment process. However, we wanted input from the field, despite the tight timeframe, so through our blog we encouraged all interested parties to submit opinions, ideas, suggestions and comments. We had two opportunities for input. When we first announced the RTT-ELC competition, we requested open input. Then, when we drafted the key policy elements of the notice, we asked for input that was specifically about this draft during the the first week of July.

We clarified and strengthened the competition based on the nearly 350 comments we received. We were pleased by the interest in the competition, and hope that this strong interest translates into strong State teams and broad stakeholder engagement in your states.

Based on this feedback, we organized the competition into five key areas of reform critical to improving the quality of early learning and development programs – (1) Successful State Systems; (2) High-Quality, Accountable Programs; (3) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children; (4) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce; and (5) Measuring Outcomes and Progress. Additionally, based on feedback that the scope was too big, we've made changes that allow States to address some – but not all – of the selection criteria without affecting their scores.

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Competition Timeline

August 23, 2011	Notice Inviting Applications (NIA), Application, and Executive Summary posted on Website
August 26, 2011	NIA published in the Federal Register
September 1, 2011	Overview Webinar
September 13, 2011	TA Workshop for Applicants
October 19, 2011	Applications due
December 2011	Winners announced

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Before we get into the details, let's talk about the timeline.

The NIA, Application, and Executive Summary, along with the budget spreadsheets, were all posted on the RTT-ELC website on Aug 23 and the NIA was published in the Federal Register on Aug 26. You'll find them at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge

Applications are due on October 19, 2011. Winners will be announced in December.

In addition to today's overview webinar, we are hosting a TA workshop for applicants on Sept. 13. We'll share more details on that in just a moment.

As you know, the grant term is 4 years, so the funds will be spent down from 2012 through 2015.

Outreach and Technical Assistance

- Webinar for States (Sept. 1)
  - Orientation about how to make sense of the notice and application
  - Q&A
- Technical Assistance Workshop (Sept 13)
  - Detailed walk-through of RTT-ELC priorities and selection criteria
  - In person in Washington DC and simulcast in 12 regions throughout the U.S. via video-teleconference (VTC)
- FAQs published online on the RTT-ELC Web site
- Questions may be emailed to: rtt.early.learning.challenge@ed.gov
- RTT-ELC Web site: http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge
- Others, as needed – let us know

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During this process we want to get information to you as quickly as possible; be responsive to your questions; and make sure that everyone has access to the same information so that a level playing field is maintained. We have 4 venues for providing technical assistance to States:

First, we are hosting this webinar to provide an overview of the notice and application.

Second, on September 13th we have scheduled a Technical Assistance Workshop to provide greater detail on the selection criteria and priorities. States can join us in person in DC in the Department of Education's auditorium or through digital video conference in 10 HHS regional sites across the country. States that have already registered for this session will be receiving information shortly. If you haven't registered yet, please do so by noon tomorrow, September 2nd, as we will be opening up extra slots to the public and additional State team members. Please note that a recording of today's webinar and the TA workshop on September 13th along with transcripts from both TA events will be posted on the Education Department's web site on the RTT-ELC program page.

Third, we will be publishing FAQs on our website, and updating them as we get new questions. The first round of FAQs should be out next week.

Fourth, you may submit questions via email to rtt.early.learning.challenge@ed.gov, and our staff will provide answers.

Please understand that for this phase of the competition, we can only answer logistical questions; answer clarifying questions pertaining to the NIA and application; and correct any misconceptions. We cannot provide one-on-one support or assistance; we have to answer questions in a public way to ensure that answers to questions of broad relevance are made available to all applicants. Our general method for doing this is through TA sessions (like this one and the one on September 13th) and through *Frequently Asked Questions* (FAQs). So if we can't give an immediate answer to a general question, please be patient. Turnaround may not be immediate – so don't save up your questions. As always, we welcome your ideas on what we can do to ensure that your questions are answered in a timely fashion.

We acknowledge that there are others out in the field who are eager to provide assistance to States as they complete their applications. While States can obtain assistance from whatever source they choose, we want to make it clear that these individuals and entities do not speak for the Departments and that the Departments do not endorse or sanction any technical assistance efforts other than those offered by the Departments.

Overview of the Notice

States must meet:

Application Requirements, e.g.:
- Signatures of Governor, Lead Agency, and Participating State Agencies (PSA)
- Certification from State's attorney general
- Budget spreadsheets
- Focused Investment Area requirements
- High-Quality Plan requirements

Program Requirements:
- Continued participation in specific programs
- Technical Assistance and Evaluation
- Make work available
- Final scopes of work

Eligibility Requirements:
- MOUs with each PSA
- Operational State Advisory Council
- Submitted MIECHV FY10 plan and FY11 application for formula funding

Applications will be scored based on:

Priorities:
- Absolute: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs
- Competitive: Including all programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Competitive: Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- Invitational*: Sustaining program effects in early elementary
- Invitational*: Encouraging private-sector support

Selection Criteria – Core Areas:
(A) Successful State Systems
(B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs

Selection Criteria – Focused Investment Areas:
(C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
(D) A Great Early Learning Workforce
(E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress

* Note that invitational priorities are not scored.

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Let's start, then, with a look at the sections of the Notice Inviting Applications. I'll give you a quick orientation to each section.

Overview of the Notice

States must meet:

Application Requirements, e.g.:
- Signatures of Governor, Lead Agency, and Participating State Agencies (PSA)
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Program Requirements:
- Continued participation in specific programs
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- Make work available
- Final scopes of work

Eligibility Requirements:
- MOUs with each PSA
- Operational State Advisory Council
- Submitted MIECHV FY10 plan and FY11 application for formula funding

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Applications will be scored based on:

basic information about what must be in the application

- ...ool Readiness for Children with High Needs
- Competitive: Including all programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Competitive: Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- Invitational*: Sustaining program effects in early elementary
- Invitational*: Encouraging private-sector support

Selection Criteria – Core Areas:
(A) Successful State Systems
(B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs

Selection Criteria – Focused Investment Areas:
(C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
(D) A Great Early Learning Workforce
(E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress

* Note that invitational priorities are not scored.

The Application Requirements section is important! It contains the basic information about what you must include in your application. (Note that what you see here isn't the full list of application requirements – read the notice for that.)

Overview of the Notice

States must meet:

Application Requirements, e.g.:
- Signatures of Governor, Lead Agency, and Participating State Agencies (PSA)
- Certification from State's attorney general
- Budget spreadsheets
- Focused Investment Area requirements
- High-Quality Plan requirements

Program Requirements:
- Continued participation in specific programs
- Technical Assistance and Evaluation
- Make work available
- Final scopes of work

Eligibility Requirements:
- MOUs with each PSA
- Operational State Advisory Council
- Submitted MIECHV FY10 plan and FY11 application for formula funding

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basic information about what must be in the application

[Applications will be scored] based on:

- [Improving Sch]ool Readiness for Children with High Needs
- Competitive: Including all programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Competitive: Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- Invitational*: Sustaining program effects in early elementary
- Invitational*: Encouraging private-sector support

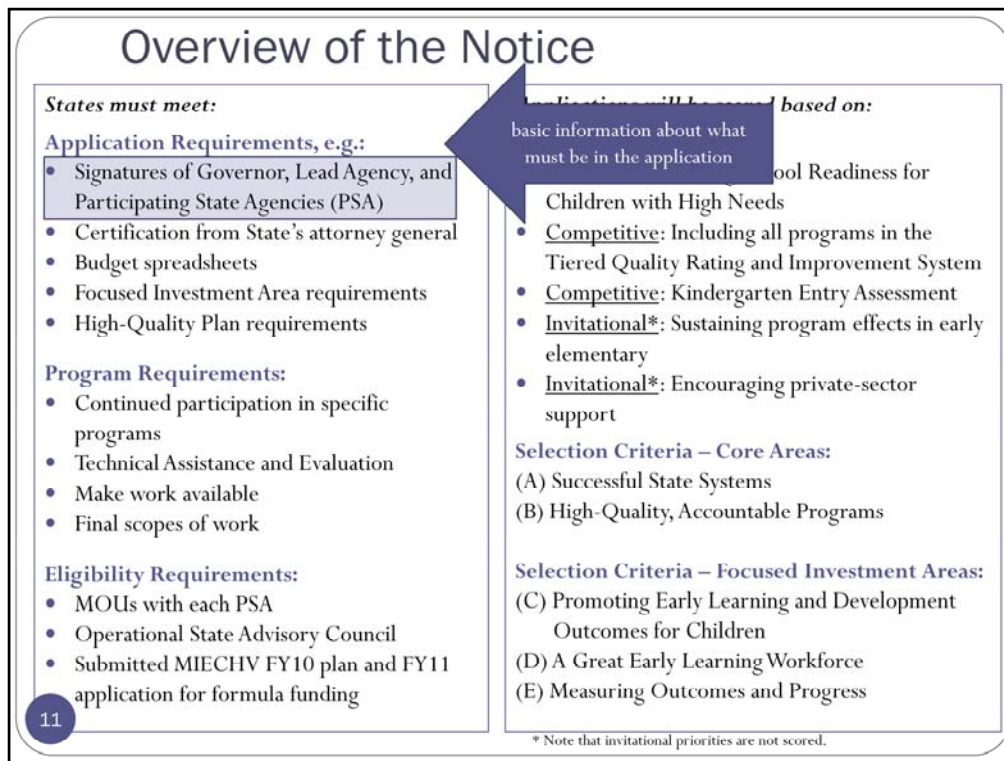**Selection Criteria – Core Areas:**
(A) Successful State Systems
(B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs
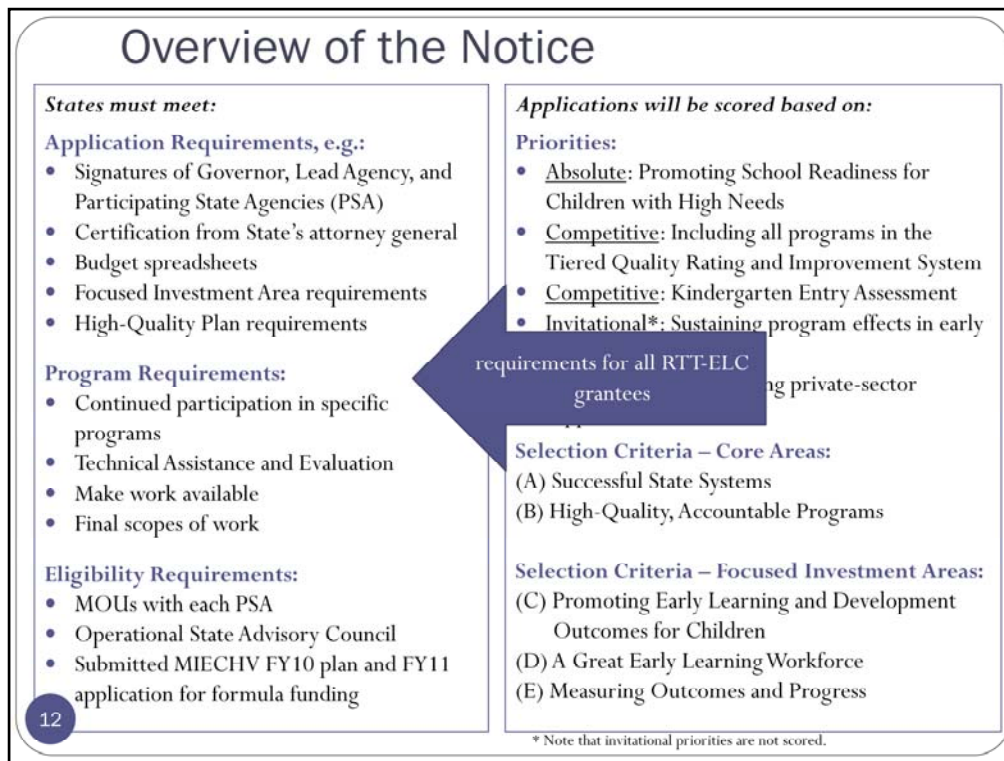
Selection Criteria – Focused Investment Areas:
(C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
(D) A Great Early Learning Workforce
(E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress

* Note that invitational priorities are not scored.
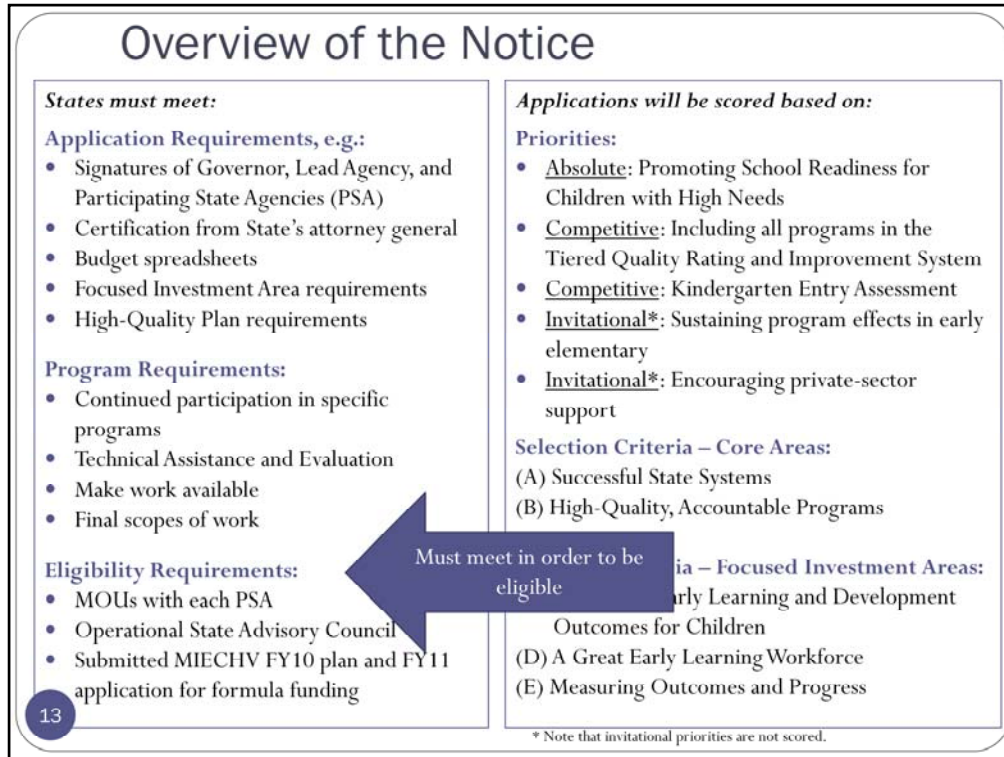
You all are well aware of the advanced planning it will take to jointly develop the application across multiple agencies in your state. We want to point out that multiple agencies are required to sign onto the application so you need to build in time for this along with getting certification from the State's attorney general.   We'll talk more about this in a few minutes.

Overview of the Notice

States must meet:

Application Requirements, e.g.:
- Signatures of Governor, Lead Agency, and Participating State Agencies (PSA)
- Certification from State's attorney general
- Budget spreadsheets
- Focused Investment Area requirements
- High-Quality Plan requirements

Program Requirements:
- Continued participation in specific programs
- Technical Assistance and Evaluation
- Make work available
- Final scopes of work

Eligibility Requirements:
- MOUs with each PSA
- Operational State Advisory Council
- Submitted MIECHV FY10 plan and FY11 application for formula funding

Applications will be scored based on:

Priorities:
- Absolute: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs
- Competitive: Including all programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Competitive: Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- Invitational*: Sustaining program effects in early ... ng private-sector

requirements for all RTT-ELC grantees

Selection Criteria – Core Areas:
(A) Successful State Systems
(B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs

Selection Criteria – Focused Investment Areas:
(C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
(D) A Great Early Learning Workforce
(E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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* Note that invitational priorities are not scored.

The Program Requirements section describes requirements for States that are awarded RTT-ELC grants.
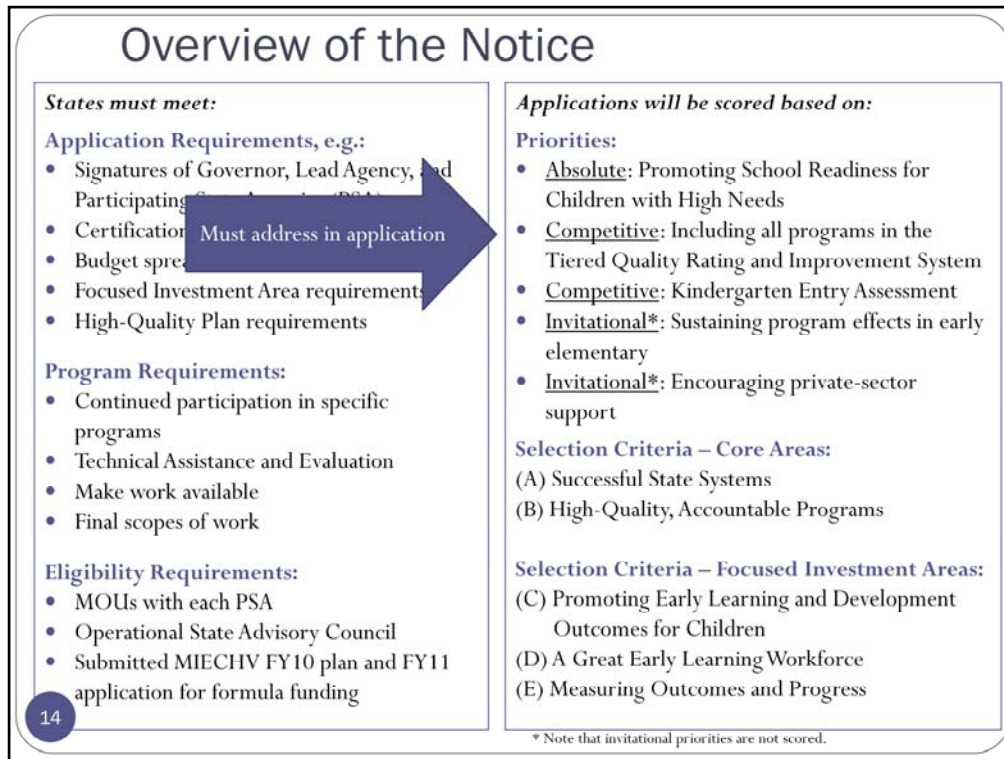
For example, those States that are awarded RTT-ELC grants must continue to participate in Parts C and B, Section 619 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF); and then new Home Visiting program.   Also, States must set aside $400,000 of the grant for Technical Assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS.

(Note that what you see here isn't the full list of program requirements – read the notice for that.)

Overview of the Notice

States must meet:

Application Requirements, e.g.:
- Signatures of Governor, Lead Agency, and Participating State Agencies (PSA)
- Certification from State's attorney general
- Budget spreadsheets
- Focused Investment Area requirements
- High-Quality Plan requirements

Program Requirements:
- Continued participation in specific programs
- Technical Assistance and Evaluation
- Make work available
- Final scopes of work

Eligibility Requirements:
- MOUs with each PSA
- Operational State Advisory Council
- Submitted MIECHV FY10 plan and FY11 application for formula funding

Must meet in order to be eligible

Applications will be scored based on:

Priorities:
- Absolute: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs
- Competitive: Including all programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Competitive: Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- Invitational*: Sustaining program effects in early elementary
- Invitational*: Encouraging private-sector support

Selection Criteria – Core Areas:
(A) Successful State Systems
(B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs

Selection Criteria – Focused Investment Areas:
(C) Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
(D) A Great Early Learning Workforce
(E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress

* Note that invitational priorities are not scored.

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In order to compete for funds at all, each State must meet the eligibility requirements. The first eligibility requirement requires that every agency in the State that administers public funds for early learning and development programs has to participate in the State's application, or the State cannot apply – and that each such Participating State Agency has to complete a Memorandum of Understanding (or MOU) describing its commitments to the State Plan. On p. 24 of the Application, you'll see that you have to fill in the name of each Participating State Agency, describe which funds/programs it administers, and provide the cross-reference to the place in the application where that agency's MOU can be found. (Note that under the application requirements an authorized representative from all Participating State Agencies must sign the Application on pp 20-21).
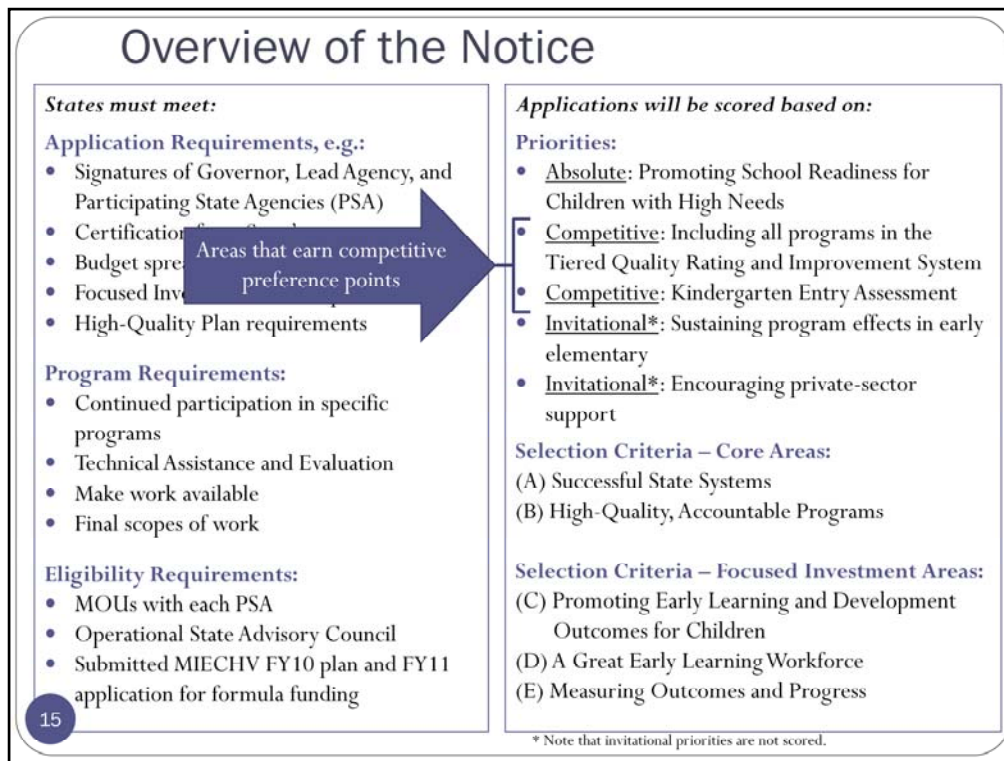
To meet the second eligibility criteria, the State must have an operational State Advisory Council that meets the requirements of the Head Start Act, but it need not be a current recipient of federal ARRA State Advisory Council funds.

Overview of the Notice

States must meet:

Application Requirements, e.g.:
- Signatures of Governor, Lead Agency, and Participating State Agencies (PSA)
- Certification
- Budget spread

Must address in application →

- Focused Investment Area requirements
- High-Quality Plan requirements

Program Requirements:
- Continued participation in specific programs
- Technical Assistance and Evaluation
- Make work available
- Final scopes of work

Eligibility Requirements:
- MOUs with each PSA
- Operational State Advisory Council
- Submitted MIECHV FY10 plan and FY11 application for formula funding

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Applications will be scored based on:

Priorities:
- Absolute: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs
- Competitive: Including all programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Competitive: Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- Invitational*: Sustaining program effects in early elementary
- Invitational*: Encouraging private-sector support

Selection Criteria – Core Areas:
(A) Successful State Systems
(B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs

Selection Criteria – Focused Investment Areas:
(C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
(D) A Great Early Learning Workforce
(E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress

* Note that invitational priorities are not scored.

Now on to priorities. There are three types of priorities: absolute, competitive, and invitational.

There is only one absolute priority in this competition: the State must show how it will build a system that improves the quality of early learning and development programs and the school readiness of children with high needs.

Applicants do not write a separate response to the absolute priority, instead they address it as they respond to the selection criteria throughout the application. The reviewers then judge holistically whether or not the State's application meets the absolute priority. States must meet the absolute priority to be considered for funding.

Overview of the Notice

States must meet:

Application Requirements, e.g.:
- Signatures of Governor, Lead Agency, and Participating State Agencies (PSA)
- Certification ~~from~~ Grants
- Budget spre~~adsheet~~
- Focused Inv~~estment~~
- High-Quality Plan requirements

Areas that earn competitive preference points

Program Requirements:
- Continued participation in specific programs
- Technical Assistance and Evaluation
- Make work available
- Final scopes of work

Eligibility Requirements:
- MOUs with each PSA
- Operational State Advisory Council
- Submitted MIECHV FY10 plan and FY11 application for formula funding

Applications will be scored based on:

Priorities:
- <u>Absolute</u>: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs
- <u>Competitive</u>: Including all programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
- <u>Competitive</u>: Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- <u>Invitational*</u>: Sustaining program effects in early elementary
- <u>Invitational*</u>: Encouraging private-sector support

Selection Criteria – Core Areas:
(A) Successful State Systems
(B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs

Selection Criteria – Focused Investment Areas:
(C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
(D) A Great Early Learning Workforce
(E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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* Note that invitational priorities are not scored.

There are two competitive preference priorities, each worth 10 points. These are like "extra credit" in the competition – they are worth "competitive points."

The first is referred to as Competitive Preference Priority 2 and focuses on including all early learning and development programs in the tiered quality rating and improvement system. States that wish to address this priority should write to it under competitive preference priority 2 in the application (see p. 72). States can earn from 0 to 10 points, depending on the quality of their responses, if they choose to write to this priority.

The second is referred to as Competitive Preference Priority 3 and focuses on the implementation of a statewide kindergarten entry assessment. States that wish to address this priority do NOT write a separate response (as they do for CPP-2). Instead, under competitive preference priority 3 in the application (see pp. 72-73), States indicate whether they believe they currently meet the priority or whether they have written to the priority as part of selection criterion (E)(1). Reviewers then judge the State's response, and States that meet the priority earn 10 points; others receive 0 points. That is, these points (unlike others in this competition) are earned on an "all or nothing" basis.

Overview of the Notice

States must meet:

Application Requirements, e.g.:
- Signatures of Governor, Lead Agency, and Participating State Agencies (PSA)
- Certification from State's attorney general
- Budget spreadsheets
- Focused Investment Area requiremen[t]
- High-Quali[ty]

Program Req
- Continued participation in specific programs
- Technical Assistance and Evaluation
- Make work available
- Final scopes of work

Eligibility Requirements:
- MOUs with each PSA
- Operational State Advisory Council
- Submitted MIECHV FY10 plan and FY11 application for formula funding

Areas of interest that extend the core work — do not earn points

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Applications will be scored based on:

Priorities:
- Absolute: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs
- Competitive: Including all programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Competitive: Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- Invitational*: Sustaining program effects in early elementary
- Invitational*: Encouraging private-sector support

Selection Criteria – Core Areas:
(A) Successful State Systems
(B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs

Selection Criteria – Focused Investment Areas:
(C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
(D) A Great Early Learning Workforce
(E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress

* Note that invitational priorities are not scored.

Invitational priorities represent areas that are of particular interest to both Secretaries. These do not earn points. However, States may allocate budget resources to these priorities.

Overview of the Notice

States must meet:

Application Requirements, e.g.:
- Signatures of Governor, Lead Agency, and Participating State Agencies (PSA)
- Certification from State's attorney general
- Budget spreadsheets
- Focused Investment Area requirements
- High-Quality Plan requirements

Program Requirements:
- Continued participation in specific programs
- Technical As...
- Make work available
- Final scopes of work

Address all criteria under core areas

Eligibility Requirements:
- MOUs with each PSA
- Operational State Advisory Council
- Submitted MIECHV FY10 plan and FY11 application for formula funding

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Applications will be scored based on:

Priorities:
- <u>Absolute</u>: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs
- <u>Competitive</u>: Including all programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
- <u>Competitive</u>: Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- <u>Invitational*</u>: Sustaining program effects in early elementary
- <u>Invitational*</u>: Encouraging private-sector support

Selection Criteria – Core Areas:
(A) Successful State Systems
(B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs

Selection Criteria – Focused Investment Areas:
(C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
(D) A Great Early Learning Workforce
(E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress

* Note that invitational priorities are not scored.

Now onto the selection criteria. Selection criteria are where we'll spend the bulk of our time today – these are the criteria you will write to throughout your application. These earn points. In this competition, there are two categories of selection criteria. First there are the Core Areas: (A) and (B). States must write to and address all criteria under (A) and (B).

Overview of the Notice

States must meet:

Application Requirements, e.g.:
- Signatures of Governor, Lead Agency, and Participating State Agencies (PSA)
- Certification from State's attorney general
- Budget spreadsheets
- Focused Investment Area requirements
- High-Quality Plan requirements

Program Requirements:
- Continued participation in specific programs
- Technical Assistance and Evaluation
- Make work available
- Final scopes of work

Eligibility Requirements:
- MOUs with
- Operational State Advisory Council
- Submitted MIECHV FY10 plan and FY11 application for formula funding

Choose criteria to address under each Focused Investment Area

Applications will be scored based on:

Priorities:
- Absolute: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs
- Competitive: Including all programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Competitive: Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- Invitational*: Sustaining program effects in early elementary
- Invitational*: Encouraging private-sector support

Selection Criteria – Core Areas:
(A) Successful State Systems
(B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs

Selection Criteria – Focused Investment Areas:
(C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
(D) A Great Early Learning Workforce
(E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress

* Note that invitational priorities are not scored.

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Second, there are three Focused Investment Areas. These offer States flexibility to develop plans that are customized to meet their specific strengths and needs. States choose which criteria to address within sections (C), (D), and (E).

Selection Criteria

- Core Areas - *States must address all of the selection criteria in the Core Areas*
    - (A) Successful State Systems
    - (B) High-Quality, Accountable Programs
- Focused Investment Areas — *States must address:*
    - *Two or more selection criteria under* (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes
    - *One or more selection criteria under* (D) A Great Early Learning Workforce; and
    - *One or more selection criteria under* (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress

Working draft. For discussion only.

9/2/2011

So while States do address all selection criteria in Core Areas (A) and (B), they have flexibility about how many and which criteria to address in the Focused Investment Areas. In section (C), States have to address at least 2 criteria, and in sections (D) and (E), States have to address at least 1 criterion in each. In these Focused Investment Areas, the points are spread evenly across the criteria that the State chooses to address, so that States are not advantaged – or disadvantaged – in the competition based on the number of criteria they choose to address.

A. Successful State Systems

(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development.

(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.

(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State.

(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.

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We are not going to talk about the specific selection criteria today. But section (A) is about how the State is organized to deliver successfully on its plans. Section A includes criteria about the State's track record in early learning, its proposed reform agenda, how all of the agencies across the State will work together to ensure alignment and coordination of their programs, and the budget for the grant. States must address all 4 of these criteria.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

(B)(2) Promoting Participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs.

(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs.

(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems.

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Section (B) is about how a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) will be developed across all of the State's agencies and programs, with a goal of having common quality definitions and metrics used statewide. States must address all 5 of these criteria.

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

States must address at least two of the following selection criteria:

(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.

(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.

(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.

(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.

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Section (C) concerns many of the elements covered by Program Standards – early learning and development standards, comprehensive assessment systems, health promotion, and family engagement. States must choose <u>at least two </u>of these areas in which additional and in-depth work is needed, and focus on those.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

States must address at least one of the following selection criteria:

(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.

(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

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Section (D) is about developing and supporting the State's early childhood education workforce. States may choose to work on <u>one or both</u> of these criteria, depending on where it feels that in-depth focus is needed.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

States must address at least one of the following selection criteria:

(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.

(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.

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Section (E) concerns measuring progress and outcomes. Here, too, States may choose to work on <u>one or both </u>of these criteria. The first criterion is about putting a kindergarten entry assessment in place, and if the State writes to this, as you'll remember, it can earn competitive points. The second criterion is about having a strong, statewide early learning data system in place.

Defined Terms

Defined Terms are found throughout the NIA and Application and are indicated by capitalization. Frequently used defined terms include:

- Children with High Needs
- Early Childhood Educator
- Early Learning and Development Program
- High-Quality Plan
- State Plan
- Lead Agency
- Participating State Agency

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Throughout the NIA and the Application, there are defined terms. Any time a defined term is used, it is designated by initial capitalization. Here you see a few of the most frequently used defined terms. All defined terms can be found on pages 14-19 of the Application. Critical information is included in the definitions, so please spend time reviewing the definitions and refer back to them as needed.

Additional Information

- Scoring Rubric and Points (Appendix B in NIA; Section XIV in Application)
- Budget
  - Budget Requirements (in NIA)
  - Budget Requirements and Budget Instructions in Section VIII (in Application)
- Competition Review and Selection Process (in the NIA)
- Participating State Agency model Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (in Appendix C of the NIA; Section XIII of Application)

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A few more things we want you to be aware of:

•First, we released the points allocations and the Scoring Rubric that reviewers will use to judge applications. This information is in Section XIV of the Application (pp. 104-110).

•Second, we released important budget information. You'll find it in Section VIII of the Application. Remember that States are organized into 4 categories based on each State's share of the national population of children birth through five from low-income families. We set budget caps for each State ranging from $50M-$100M. This is very important: States that propose budgets over their budget caps will not be considered for funding. Additionally, as part of States' applications, they have to complete specific budget forms and narratives; these are also located in Section VIII of the Application, together with detailed instructions. We will walk through the budget section of the Application at the TA workshop on Sept 13.

•Third, in the NIA you will find an overview of the competition Review and Selection Process, which describes how the competition itself will be run. (See p. 82)

•Finally, to help streamline the process of signing on Participating State Agencies, we have provided a model MOU that States may use or modify if they feel it would be helpful. This is in Section XIII of the Application, pp. 98-103.

How the Pieces Fit Together
The Parts to Respond to...

For each criterion, there are up to three parts

- **Narrative:** For each criterion the State addresses, the State writes its narrative response in the space provided. Describe how the State has addressed or will address that criterion.
- **Evidence:** Some selection criteria require specific information requested as supporting evidence. States may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers in judging the State's plan.
- **Performance Measures:** For several selection criteria, the State is asked to provide goals and annual targets, baseline data, and other information.

27   9/2/2011

Okay…back to the selection criteria and the Application. Remember, most of your Application will be responses to selection criteria.

For all selection criteria, there are three parts to keep in mind when you start writing. First, there's a narrative. For every single selection criterion you respond to, you'll have a narrative. While this is mainly prose, you may also include text, tables, charts or graphs – whatever will ensure clarity. Second, some criteria also require specific evidence. We're going to talk more about evidence in a minute. Finally, some criteria require performance measures – we'll talk about these in a minute too.

Let's walk through 2 different examples.

Example 1: No specific evidence or performance measure
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs (15 points)

criterion → The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and

(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (*e.g.*, displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

28   (See application pp. 50-51)   9/2/2011

In the application each criterion is laid out in the same general structure: the criterion, the instructions, and the text box where you fill in your narrative response.

(B)(3) is an example of a criterion that follows this simple structure and does not require specific evidence or performance measures; your only response for this will be to write a narrative response and, optionally, to include any other evidence you think is relevant. (Feel free to attach additional evidence in the Appendix, but reference it in your narrative or the reviewers may not consider it).

Example 1: No specific evidence or performance measure
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs (15 points)

criterion →

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Using a valid and reliable [...] onitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have [...] er-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learni[...] Defined terms [...] ient Programs with appropriate frequency; and

(b) Providing quality ratin[...] nformation to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (*e.g.*, displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

29   (See application pp. 50-51)   9/2/2011

Note the defined terms that are indicated through initial capitalization.   Again remember to refer back to the definitions section (beginning on p. 14 of the Application) to make sure you know what is meant by each term.

Example 1: No specific evidence or performance measure
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development
Programs (15 points)

directions →

In the text box below, the State shall write its full response to this selection criterion. The State may also include any additional information it believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. If the State has included relevant attachments in the Appendix, these should be described in the narrative below and clearly cross-referenced to allow the reviewers to locate them easily.

In scoring the selection criterion, peer reviewers will determine, based on the evidence the State submits, whether each element of the selection criterion is implemented or planned; the quality of the implementation or plan (see the definition of a High-Quality Plan for the components reviewers will be judging); the extent to which the different types of Early Learning and Development Programs in the State are included and addressed; and the extent to which the unique needs of the State's special populations of Children with High Needs are considered and addressed. The State is responsible for providing clear and detailed information to assist the peer reviewers in making these determinations.

30   (See application pp. 50-51)   9/2/2011

Following the criterion, in italics you will find the instructions about what to write. These are the instructions for criterion (B)(3).

Note that for each of the selection criteria under (C), (D), and (E), the directions start with the phrase "If the State chooses to respond to this selection criterion . . ."

Example 1: No specific evidence or performance measure
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs (15 points)

*(Enter **narrative** here – recommended maximum of five pages)*

narrative →

High-Quality Plan means any plan developed by the State to address a selection criterion or priority in the notice that is feasible and has a high probability of successful implementation and at a minimum includes--

(a) The key goals;
(b) The key activities to be undertaken; the rationale for the activities; and, if applicable, where in the State the activities will be initially implemented, and where and how they will be scaled up over time to eventually achieve statewide implementation;
(c) A realistic timeline, including key milestones, for implementing each key activity;
(d) The party or parties responsible for implementing each activity and other key personnel assigned to each activity;
(e) Appropriate financial resources to support successful implementation of the plan;
(f) The information requested as supporting evidence, if any, together with any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers in judging the credibility of the plan;
(g) The information requested in the performance measures, where applicable;
(h) How the State will address the needs of the different types of Early Learning and Development Programs, if applicable; and
(i) How the State will meet the needs of Children with High Needs, as well as the unique needs of special populations of Children with High Needs.

31   (See application pp. 50-51)   9/2/2011

Finally, there is a text box for every criterion and this is where you start typing. Enter your response directly in the Application, which is a standard Microsoft Word document that you can download from the website: http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge. Each criterion includes a recommended maximum number of pages. These represent a "best guess" on our part for about how long your response might be. These are not binding limits – but do remember that, from a reviewer's point of view, clarity matters and brevity will be appreciated.

Note: Many of the criteria refer to the State submitting a High-Quality Plan. This is a defined term that we recommend you become very familiar with. Peer reviewers will judge the quality of a State's plan based on this definition! You'll find it on pp. 16-17 of the Application.

Example 2: Specific Evidence Requested
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development (20 points)

Evidence for (A)(1):

evidence → The completed background data tables providing the State's baseline data for--

- The number and percentage of children from Low-Income families in the State, by age (see Table (A)(1)-1);
- The number and percentage of Children with High Needs from special populations in the State (see Table (A)(1)-2); and
- The number of Children with High Needs in the State who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs, by age (see Table (A)(1)-3).

- Data currently available, if any, on the status of children at kindergarten entry (across Essential Domains of School Readiness, if available), including data on the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers.

- Data currently available, if any, on program quality across different types of Early Learning and Development Programs.

Etc . . . .

32   (See application pp. 26-38)   9/2/2011

Most of the selection criteria go beyond the simple "criterion, directions, text box" structure and also include specific evidence a State should address. Here's an example from criterion (A)(1) of evidence that is specifically requested. Sometimes the requested evidence is filling in a table that you'll find in the Application; other times it is something specific the State should describe in the text box and/or attach in an Appendix.

If specific evidence is being requested for a criterion, this evidence is listed right after the instructions.

Example 2: Specific Evidence Requested
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development (20 points)

Table (A)(1)-1: Children from Low-Income families, by age

	Number of children from Low-Income families in the State	Children from Low-Income families as a percentage of all children in the State
Infants under age 1		
Toddlers ages 1 through 2		
Preschoolers ages 3 to kindergarten entry		
Total number of children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families		

[Enter text here to indicate data source and clarify or explain any of these data if needed]

33   (See application pp. 50-51)   9/2/2011

Here is an example of an evidence table from criterion (A)(1). We include tables in the Application for two reasons:

- First, it makes it clear to States what information they need to provide.
- Second, it helps reviewers to see this information displayed consistently across all applications.

The purpose of this particular table is to provide background data about the State's population of children birth through age five. An applicant would fill in the table and then discuss the data in the narrative as it relates to responding to the criterion.

Example 2: Specific Evidence Requested
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development (20 points)

Table (A)(1)-1: Children from Low-Income families, by age

	Number of children from Low-Income families in the State	Children from Low-Income families as a percentage of all children in the State
Infants under age 1		
Toddlers ages 1 through 2		
Preschoolers ages 3 to kindergarten entry		
Total number of children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families		

instructions → *[Enter text here to indicate data source and clarify or explain any of these data if needed]*

34 (See application pp. 50-51) 9/2/2011

Note that most tables have special instructions or additional information requested in the final row.

Example 2: Specific Evidence Requested:
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development (20 points)

*(Enter **narrative** here – recommended maximum of ten pages)*

narrative

35 (See application pp. 50-51)   9/2/2011

Finally, in addition to filling out all of the tables, States still need to respond to the criterion in a narrative.

About Performance Measures

- Performance measures include goals and annual targets, baseline data, and other information.
- Where performance measures are required, tables are provided in the application.
- In addition, the State may provide additional performance measures, baseline data, and targets for any criterion it chooses.
- Reviewers will consider, as part of their evaluations of the State's application, the extent to which the State has set ambitious yet achievable annual targets for the performance measures in support of the State's plan.
- To minimize burden, performance measures have been requested only where the Departments intend to report nationally on them and for measures that lend themselves to objective and comparable data gathering.

36   9/2/2011

Finally, some selection criteria include "performance measures." Performance measures include goals and annual targets, baseline data, and other information. Where performance measures are required, we have put tables right into the application. They come just after the narrative.

Reviewers will consider, as part of their evaluations, the extent to which the State has set ambitious yet achievable annual targets for the performance measures. What does this mean? They'll be looking for how you connect the plan in your narrative with your performance measures.

•Are you being ambitious in what you're attempting to do?

•And are you also being realistic in proposing a plan that you can achieve?

•Have you balanced ambition and achievement thoughtfully and well?

These are the questions reviewers will be asking themselves as they read your responses to plan criteria. To help reinforce the seriousness of these questions, we want to remind you that funding events could be triggered – or delayed or even withheld – based on the State's actual performance against the annual targets you set in your application, so consider them carefully.

Here's an example of a performance measure table from criterion (D)(2).

Rather than reporting data (as you do in evidence tables), in performance measures you are setting targets or goals. In this table, States fill their baseline data in the first column and then their annual targets for in the next four columns. All cells that are blank should be filled in.

Planning Considerations

For your immediate consideration:

- Determine Lead Agency and all Participating State Agencies so you can start to—
  - Decide on your core application planning team
  - Decide on TA attendees
  - Start developing MOUs
  - Start developing Participating State Agencies' budgets
- Determine other key groups/coalitions in the State who will be part of your core application planning team
- Develop a list of questions to bring to the TA workshop

And remember that you'll need to:

- Line up the required signatures before you submit your application
- Line up the certification from the State's Attorney General
- Complete a detailed budget

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9/2/2011

Before we take your questions, we wanted to point out a couple of things worthy of forethought as you prepare your application work plans.
Don't forget that, in short order, you will need to determine which agency in the State will be the Lead Agency – the fiscal agent and the grant lead. You also need to identify all required Participating State Agencies. This will allow you to start deciding on your core application planning team and your TA workshop attendees. It will also allow you to start developing MOUs and budgets with your Participating State Agencies.

You'll also want to start thinking about key groups (like community-based organizations (CBOs), business roundtables, foundations, and others) in the State who will be part of your core application planning team. And you'll want to develop a list of questions to bring to the TA workshop.

Finally, remember to think about lining up the signatures and certifications you'll need before you submit the application. And start working with your budget teams early!

Submitting an Application

- Submit a CD or DVD that includes:
  - A single file that contains the body of the application, including required budget tables, that has been converted into a .PDF
  - A single file in a .PDF format that contains all of the required signature pages
  - A single file that contains the completed electronic budget spreadsheets
- Submit a signed original of Section IV of the application and one copy of that signed original
- Indicate CFDA number 84.412 on the mailing envelope
- Have your application hand delivered or mailed (overnight mail recommended) – note different addresses for hand delivery and overnight mail delivery (see page 112 of the Application)
- Must be *received* (not postmarked!) by 4:30:00 p.m. (Washington, DC time) on October 19, 2011…or we cannot accept it!

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The last thing – submitting your application. You are required to submit your application on a CD or DVD; this will allow you to organize your information clearly and to provide a definitive and unchangeable version. We recommend you submit your application as a single searchable PDF file. The submission guidelines provided in Section XV of the application are clear – but it's worth reiterating that we need to receive the application by October 19 – this is not the date by which your application must be postmarked, it's the date we must receive it. For this reason, we recommend that you hand deliver your application or have it sent by overnight mail.   We've also included an application checklist in section XVI of the application that we hope will be a helpful tool.

RTT-ELC Resources

Website: http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge
- *Notice Inviting Applications (NIA)*
- *Application*
- *Budget Spreadsheets*
- Supporting Materials:
  - *Executive Summary of RTT-ELC*
  - *Frequently Asked Questions*
  - *Presentations and Transcripts*

Technical Assistance:
- TA Planning Workshop:
  September 13 (Washington DC and Video Conference)

Email questions to rtt.early.learning.challenge@ed.gov

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One last bit of information before we turn the floor over to you – we released four documents last week. We know how daunting this likely feels, so let us give you a quick tour of what you have and where to find information.

•The official regulation is the notice inviting applications, or the NIA.

•The most useful documents are the Application itself and the Executive Summary. These are the two documents I would study first. The Application is a Microsoft Word document that you will fill in. The Executive Summary is an excerpt from the NIA that includes all of the "policy" elements in an accessible form: the eligibility requirements, priorities, selection criteria, and definitions.

•We also released a budget spreadsheet. This is a Microsoft Excel workbook that States use to develop their budgets for their RTT-ELC application.

•Finally, we are building an FAQ document that we will keep updated as we get questions from you.

•Remember, we are holding a Technical Assistance Workshop for States on September 13 – States can join us in person in DC (in the Department of Education auditorium) or through digital video conference in the HHS regional sites. Many States have already registered for this session and will be receiving information shortly. If you haven't please do so by 12:00pm tomorrow, September 2nd, as we will be opening up extra slots to the public and additional State team members soon.   Please note that a recording of today's webinar and the TA workshop on September 13th along with the transcripts from both TA events will be posted on the Education Department's web site on the RTT-ELC program page

With that…we'll be quiet and start listening. We know you have a lot of questions, and will certainly have even more over the coming weeks as you get deeper into the documents. Let's take the first question now.